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City Staff Report

Report Date: Jan 18, 2018**Meeting Date:** Jan 23, 2108**To:** City Manager**From:** Director of Corporate and Financial Services**Subject:** Budget Survey

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to review the results of the online budget survey that was conducted in Dec 2017.

Summary

The Preliminary 2018 Budget survey was the first time the City has looked for input to the Budget with a survey. The survey received 120 responses and the Financial Sustainability Committee has reviewed all the comments received.

Some of the highlights of the survey results include:

- 82% of the respondents to the survey were satisfied with how the City was doing.
- 49% are willing to pay a tax increase to cover additional costs of the same or more services.
- The respondents liked the option of online surveys for giving budget input but many noted that they felt more information was required about what services the Municipalities provide to answer the questions.

The City will work on some educational pieces to let residents know what services are provided by the various levels of government, federal vs provincial vs municipal vs regional district to help them respond better to similar questions in the future.

Recommendation

THAT Council receive this report for information.

Statutory Requirements

Section 166 of the Community Charter requires that council undertake a public consultation process regarding the proposed financial plan before it is adopted.

Background

The online survey asked 9 questions (see attached).

The first question asked was to gauge how the public felt about the job that the City was currently doing. Overall 82% of the respondents were satisfied with the work the City is doing.

This year, the City has worked hard to bring you better services while also finding ways to save money. We installed a new playground in South Quesnel, replaced the playground in LeBourdais Park, installed accessible downtown washrooms, finished the West Quesnel Land Stability Phase II project, created Arena parking and completed lane and street upgrades, and much more! How do you feel we did?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Very satisfied	43.33%
Somewhat satisfied	38.33%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	7.50%
Somewhat dissatisfied	9.17%
Very dissatisfied	1.67%
TOTAL	

In addition questions were asked about what objectives Council should be looking forward at, what additional services people wanted, what services they might be willing to give up, whether or not they were willing to pay increased taxes for services and how they would like to give input to the budget.

Several themes arose throughout the survey responses.

More crime enforcement/policing – The City is actively engaged on this issue through its Public Safety and Policing Committee. In Budget 2018 Council has committed to adding another part time clerk and a part time Victim Services clerk to the staff at the RCMP detachment to enable the RCMP to have more time in the field.

Encouraging capital investment/job creation – In Council's tax framework major industrial and light industrial taxes were frozen at 2015 rates. This was to help rebalance those tax rates to bring to a level more attractable to new investment.

Tourism – The City has launched a new tourism website (<http://tourismquesnel.com>). Through grant funding, the City has contracted a Social Media Coordinator to increase the frequency and quality of posts on the Explore Quesnel Facebook and Instagram page. The City has updated its brochure and relocation guide. The updated playground at Lebourdais is attracting lots of people to stop and check it out.

Tourism/Trails - The City has recently completed a North Cariboo Trails Inventory and Master Plan and is moving towards the implementation stage.

Affordable Housing – In 2018 Development Services continued advancing several housing applications that will see up to 96 new housing units in the community over the next couple of years. This included reviewing building permit and housing incentive agreements for the two new apartments (38 units) in North Quesnel. In addition work continues on the proposed Elliott Street Supportive Housing Facility.

Bypass – This would be a provincial highways project. The City is actively engaged with the Ministry of Transportation to look at safety improvements on Highway 97.

Residential Tax Rates - The City's residential taxes remain in the bottom quartile for the province. In 2017 the City's municipal taxes for average house in Quesnel ranked 124 out of 162 when compared to the taxes paid by the average house in other communities in British Columbia. Quesnel's municipal taxes were \$853 for the average house compared to an average of \$1,449 for the province. The City is always looking for ways to improve the efficiency of our services to deliver the best value to our taxpayers.

More indoor amenities/Improvements to current ones – The City currently has two grant applications in for an upgrade to the pool and the addition of a gymnastics facility to the soccer building.

Garbage/Recycling Services – The City is currently look at options for zero waste. This includes both educational opportunities and improvements to the landfill and recycling options in the future.



Encourage Arts and Entertainment – The City is currently undertaking a feasibility study for a Community Theatre.

More Transit - Every few years the City undertakes a service review of the transit routes currently being provided to ensure that the service being provided are meeting the demands of the users within a reasonable budget/taxation level for the service.

Water/Sewer to all areas of the City – The City undertook a Water & Sewer Servicing Study in 2013 that summarized the estimated costs to service areas with water or sewer that are not currently serviced. At this time grants are not available for these types of projects. Costs would need to be paid by the residents of those areas.

West Quesnel Land Stability Project - Phase II of this project was completed in 2017. The land movement is current being monitored.

Possible new amenities/services requested – Frisbee golf at Southhills park, trails

Attachments

1. Survey Questions